

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Mr. President, members. LB 678 is the omnibus child care bill, which I want to extend my appreciation to this body for passing last week. It was a major initiative to try and do a number of things to improve child care in the State of Nebraska and this Legislature took the action of passing it and sending it to the Governor. Unfortunately the Governor decided to veto the bill. As you know, we worked long and hard on that issue. And in general the issue of children in this state and different matters that concern children have been of high priority to this Legislature this session. We did pass LB 567, dealing with an early childhood training support center, and that was passed, and I thank the Governor for signing that bill. LB 662 was a bill that would have provided for different family support services across the state and the Legislature passed but had that bill vetoed by the Governor. That will be coming up later perhaps. LB 663 was passed in the Juvenile Services Act, that did get signed by the Governor. Again, appreciate it. And LB 720, a bill that increased caseloads for those caseworkers working with children in foster care and also for child abuse, was passed by this Legislature and signed by the Governor. Again, I extend my appreciation to this Legislature and the Governor for taking that action. So we did do some things and the Governor did sign some bills. So I feel good about that. Unfortunately one of the biggest pieces of the issue is the child care issue. There we have not seen the support of the Governor in signing the bill that we had hoped for. The Governor talked about, in her veto message, that the Lamb amendment, which I didn't particularly care for but did get adopted and provided an exclusion for those counties with 15,000 or fewer residents, was one of the concerns she had and raised constitutional questions with the bill. I agree, it raised constitutional questions. We have a severability clause. We could have dealt with that matter, and I had accepted that despite my reservations about it. So I think that's unfortunate. The other concern she expressed in her veto message, talked about coordination in the Department of Education. Clearly, that could have been done and done quite easily, and we expected it to be done. The Title XX day care rate increase, which is the big portion of the cost of the bill, the 1.2 million dollars, is a big ticket item, but we are talking about low income trying to move off of welfare, trying to get into the job...into jobs and trying to get training. These are the kind of folks we want to help. We want to provide them adequate child care to help them do that. But that costs money, and we need to do that. Unfortunately, this bill being